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on the DOT

PHL tourism chief pushes for increased connectivity, interoperability of vax certs, equalization of opportunities, and sustainability in APEC tourism ministers' meet

BANGKOK, Thailand – Increased connectivity, travel convenience, equal opportunities, and sustainable tourism.

These were the focus points of Tourism Secretary Christina Garcia Frasco in her presentation at the 11th Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Tourism Ministerial Meeting (TMM).

Secretary Frasco led the Philippines' delegation to the 11th APEC TMM, joining Tourism Minister counterparts and high-ranking officials from APEC Member Economies including Australia, Brunei Darussalam, Canada, Chile, China (virtual participation), Hong Kong, Indonesia (virtual participation), Japan, Republic of Korea, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Peru, The Russian Federation, Singapore, Chinese Taipei, Thailand, United States of America, and Viet Nam.

During the discussion that was facilitated by Thailand Minister of Tourism and Sports (MOTS) and 11th APEC TMM Chair Phiphat Ratchakitprakarn on the key strategies to accelerate the recovery of travel and tourism in the post-COVID-19 pandemic, Secretary Frasco shared some of the tourism recovery strategies of the Philippine government, which can be magnified and adapted on a larger scale in areas like the APEC region. ***(continue on page 2)***

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Increased connectivity through infrastructure development, increased flights, and information digitalization

To increase connectivity with APEC Member Economies and the rest of the world, Secretary Frasco shed light on the Philippines' strategies to introduce improvements to infrastructure and transportation in order to provide an enhanced and affordable experience for visitors.

"*Connectivity aims to ensure that our tourist destinations are accessible through improved transportation networks and affordable travel costs. Our approach is geared towards proactive and aggressive infrastructure development that provides quality access to roads, bridges, water systems, and various methods of transportation by land, sea, and air,*" explained Secretary Frasco.

The Tourism Secretary also disclosed the country's plans of partnering with airlines and airports in the reinstatement of flights and development of new routes in order to restore affordable and competitive rates for international and domestic travel.

"*We shall facilitate partnerships with airlines and airports with the reinstatement of flights and the development of new routes with the end in view improving connectivity across economies within the APEC and across the globe and restoring affordable and competitive rates for international and domestic travel,*" announced Secretary Frasco.

As she communicated the commitment of the Philippine government, through the Department of Tourism (DOT), to carry out measures that will introduce proactive and aggressive development in all aspects of tourism, Secretary Frasco also identified digitalization of access of information and booking services enhancement as one of the major strategies eyed to enhance end-to-end connectivity in the country.

"*We are closely studying the development of a tourist life cycle app, a mobile application that connects tourists to accommodation, food, shopping, transportation and the like that will also enable us to monitor tourism intelligence data to better improve our tourism services,*" said the Tourism Secretary.

Vaccine interoperability for a more convenient travel experience

In terms of increasing travel convenience, Secretary Frasco advocated for the interoperability of vaccine certificates, uniformity of protocols, and establishment of tourism circuits across APEC Member Economies.

The Tourism Secretary had earlier stated the country's support to the interoperability of vaccine certificates after the APEC Policy Support made a presentation on its report titled "COVID-19 and Cross Border Mobility in the APEC Region: Addressing Uncertainties at the Border" during the morning part of the APEC TMM.

"*To advance safe mobility, the Philippines supports the push for the interoperability of vaccine certificates. The Philippines is one with the tourism industry in supporting steps being undertaken to continue to open up our borders and facilitate seamless travel across destinations and economies in order to spur economic activity and people-to-people connectivity,*" said Secretary Frasco.

"*Convenience may be spurred to ensure the uniformity of protocols and the interoperability of vaccine certificates across economies, as well as the development and updating of travel applications to make travel and destination information readily available,*" she added.

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Equal opportunities and sustainable tourism for all

Given the unprecedented effects of the pandemic on the global tourism industry, Secretary Frasco also encouraged APEC Member Economies to equalize tourism opportunities across underdeveloped destinations in order to spread economic benefits, a strategy that the DOT has commenced in its pursuit to spur national tourism recovery and fulfill the vision of President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. for the tourism industry to become one of the country's major economic pillars.

"*With new market preferences emerging for more sustainable tourism products, there is now an opportunity for new tourism destinations and products to be developed, paving the way for more multi-dimensional tourism experiences that are immersive and reflective of the unique cultures of the various economies in APEC,*" said Secretary Frasco.

"*The equalization of opportunities across underdeveloped destinations among APEC Member Economies is critical to spread economic opportunities to ensure that no one is left behind as we reboot and restart the travel and tourism industry,*" she noted.

Fully aware of tourism's propensity to have adverse impact on local communities and the environment if done without proper regulation within the jurisdiction, Secretary Frasco strongly pushed for the prioritization of sustainable tourism practices, and coordination between APEC economies, as well as national and local governments.

"*Since we've all envisioned the long-term success of the tourism industry, sustainable tourism paired with effective local and national governance and coordination spells the way forward. It is for this reason that we advocate for a close collaboration between APEC economies as well as national and local governments to prolong the life cycle of a tourist destination. Sustainable tourism policies need to be integrated within a wider economic, social, and environmental policy consideration within an overall sustainable development framework,*" said Secretary Frasco.

"*We must therefore look at the basic elements of sustainable development as a guide post in the revival and continued recovery of the tourism industry across our economies,*" added Secretary Frasco, who is the youngest among the heads of national tourism organizations present at the 11th APEC TMM.

The APEC TMM is the highest decision-making body of the APEC Tourism Sector. Hosted by Thailand, the 11th APEC TMM is the first time that Tourism Ministers from the APEC Member Economies have physically convened since the last APEC TMM that was held in Papua New Guinea in 2018. ***DOT***

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More than 1,500 tourism jobs to be offered in joint DOT-DOLE job fair

MANILA, Philippines – More than 1,500 job vacancies will be offered during the initial leg of the "Trabaho, Turismo, Asenso! Philippine Tourism Job Fair" happening this coming September 22 to 24.

Tourism Secretary Christina Garcia Frasco made the announcement on August 30 during the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signing between the Department of Tourism (DOT) and the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE).

"*The agreement we are formalizing today by way of a memorandum of understanding Between the Department of Tourism and the Department of Labor and Employment is essential, responsive and proactive to the tourism employment sector*," said Secretary Frasco.

"*I express my profound gratitude to DOLE Secretary Bienvenido Laguesma for his kind acceptance and willingness to undertake this collaboration with the DOT to open up employment and livelihood opportunities to our fellow Filipinos in the tourism industry across our islands in the Philippines. Through this MOU between the DOT and DOLE, we will jointly conduct job fairs to fill in the gaps caused by job lost due the pandemic on one, and on the other the need to fill up essential job vacancies of the gradually recovering tourism industry,*" added Secretary Frasco.

The MOU, which was signed between the two Secretaries and witnessed by DOT Undersecretary Ferdinand Jumapao and DOLE OIC-Undersecretary for Employment and Human Resource Development Paul Vincent Añover, seeks to formalize the partnership of both national agencies to provide an avenue for the creation of employment opportunities in the tourism sector and allied industries.

A total of 1,538 vacancies, 1,273 of which are full-time job posts and 265 part-time openings from the 293 establishments surveyed by the DOT as of August 30 will be offered during the initial leg of the "Trabaho, Turismo, Asenso! Philippine Tourism Job Fair", which the DOT and DOLE shall simultaneously launch in three different cities across the country.

As determined by the DOLE Online Establishment Reporting System, the Accommodation and Food Service Activities Industry recorded 12,717 local job displacements from 739 reporting establishments from January to June 2022.

"*Tonight's event comes at an important juncture, where we join together in this MOU to further advance our partnership and support. With this, I would like to express my gratitude to Secretary Ma. Esperanza Christina Garcia Frasco, for spearheading this advocacy of creating a space for our workers to bounce back and become contributors to our recovering economy...Ang DOLE po at ang DOT ay patuloy na magsasagawa ng tulad ng mga job fairs upang mapabilis ang pagkakaroon ng trabaho lalong lalo sa turismo at nang masiguro na sama-sama ang bawat Pilipino sa pag-asenso,*" DOLE Secretary Bienvenido Laguesma expressed during the MOU signing.

The Manila leg of the job fair series will run from September 22 to 24 at the SMX Convention Center Manila, in Pasay City, while the Cebu and Davao legs are scheduled to happen from September 22 to 23, at the SM City Cebu and Abreeza Mall in Davao City, respectively.

Companies who wish to join the job fair may coordinate with their concerned DOT Regional Offices. Likewise, interested applicants and job hunters may coordinate with the DOT's regional offices or with Ms. Cassandra Camonggol of the DOT Office of Industry Manpower Development (OIMD) at email address dot-oimd@tourism.gov.ph for further information on the event.

The Manila leg of "Trabaho, Turismo, Asenso! Philippine Tourism Job Fair" will be concurrently staged at the SM Convention Center with the Hotels Supplier Show, after Global-Link MP, one of the private sector partners of the DOT and DOLE, allotted 50 booths for the job fair at no cost.

Members of the House of Representatives led by Deputy Speaker Vincent Franco Frasco, Representative of 5th District of Cebu; Deputy Speaker Raymund Democrito Mendoza of TUCP Party List; Eleandro Jesus Madrona, Representative Lone District of Romblon; Midy N. Cua, Representative Lone District of Quirino; Jose Gay Padiernos of GP PARTY; as well as Technical Education And Skills Development Authority (TESDA) Director General Danilo Cruz; and partners from the private sector Global-Link MP Events Int'l Inc. COO Ma. Lourdes Lagandaon and Tourism Congress of the Philippines President Jose Clemente III were present to support the event.

"*With the collaborative spirit of the national government, the local government units, the private sector, the DOT is optimistic that the Philippines can claim its position on the global stage, jobs will be regained, and tourism-related enterprises will bounce back stronger than ever, sooner rather than later*," added Secretary Frasco. ***DOT***

Frasco lays out DOT plans and programs for industry recovery; lawmakers bat for higher DOT budget

BATASAN PAMBANSA – Tourism Secretary Christina Garcia Frasco on August 31 unveiled the new projects and convergence programs that the Department of Tourism (DOT) intends to carry out, during the briefing with the House Committee on Appropriations on the proposed 2023 budget of the agency.

The DOT presented the budget of Php 3.573 billion for FY 2023 covering the Department's Office of the Secretary (OSec), Intramuros Administration (IA), National Parks Development Committee (NPDC), and the Philippine Commission on Sports Scuba Diving (PCSSD)—which is currently transitioning as an attached agency of the Department.

The plans, according to Frasco, will include the establishment of tourist service rest areas and information counters across the country, the development of a tourist lifecycle app, a Tourist Assistance Call Center, and the launching of a guest incentive system, among others.

Tourist Service Rest Areas

Sharing her enthusiasm with the House Members, Secretary Frasco gave a preview of the tourist service rest areas that the DOT will break ground across the country, with at least ten (10) to be placed in strategic locations in Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao within this year.

"*These areas will serve the travelers in need of accommodation, information, safety, and security. It will also have a pasalubong center inside, displaying our local products, highlighting the Filipino artistry*," Secretary Frasco said of the tourist service rest areas, which the DOT will implement through its Tourism Infrastructure and Enterprise Zone Authority (TIEZA), and with the support of the local government units (LGUs).

Further, to ensure ease of access for all, Frasco noted that the DOT will also provide persons with disabilities (PWD) facilities in the tourist service rest areas, as well as PWD ramps in national tourism sites.

Tourist Lifecycle App

To ensure internet service availability and to build tourism intelligence that will provide necessary data and knowledge on how to improve the tourist experience, Secretary Frasco disclosed that the DOT shall develop a Tourist Lifecycle App.

Aside from serving as the DOT's needed data for tourism intelligence such as tourists' spending and their length of stay in a destination, the app will have a tourist support feature and an e-commerce platform that will showcase Filipino products.

"*We will create a Tourist Lifecycle App which will serve as a 'Super App' that aims to connect tourists to accredited tourism establishments for accommodation, food, shopping, rides to accredited transportation, tour operators, and tour guides,*" explained Secretary Frasco.

Improvement of land and sea tourist facilities

The DOT's immediate plans and programs to increase traveler convenience include the introduction of improvements to existing land and sea facilities in the country to make these more efficient, aesthetically appealing, and reflective of the Filipino brand. To achieve this, the DOT shall incorporate distinct Filipino brands in the country's gateways through design, furniture, and uniform signages that will guide tourists and passengers regarding time and distance to boarding gates, and shall actively push for efficient service and reduction of passenger waiting time. According to Secretary Frasco, the DOT has identified Ninoy Aquino International Airport (NAIA)

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Terminal 2, Davao International Airport, and Cebu City Pier 1 as the pilot projects for the gateway enhancement program which it will implement in collaboration with the Department of Transportation (DOTr).

The Department also plans to put up a Tourist Assistance Call Center and a One-Stop-Shop where tourists can get information and assistance with their travel-related concerns.

"*At the moment if you are a tourist in the Philippines, and you encounter problems or scams, for some reason or the other, you simply do not know who to call or where to go. We plan to change that by providing a Tourist Assistance Call Center to serve as a One-Stop-Shop for our tourists, so that they may be able to obtain the assistance that they need so their experience in the Philippines will be memorable and that they feel safe and secure as they travel across the country,*" said Secretary Frasco.

Health and Security of Visitors

The Tourism Secretary also said that maintaining peace and order in the country's tourism destinations is also among the DOT's top priorities under her leadership.

"*We have already coordinated with the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) to continue the presence of tourist police under the TOPCOP program. The DOT has likewise begun its coordination with the DILG for the continued training of these TOPCOPs, and to request from the DILG that the tour of duty of the members of the Philippine National Police (PNP) shall be lengthened, so that the training will not be wasted as well, and they can have a longer time staying in the key destinations,*" she explained.

In addition to securing and enhancing the country's tourism destinations, Secretary Frasco also bared the DOT's commitment to ensure the health of tourists through the conduct of due diligence of medical facilities in tourism destinations.

"*I personally directed to conduct a due diligence among all key destinations all over the country to identify what are the available health facilities that be improved and/or need to be put up in order to ensure that should our tourists come upon any accident, or any untoward incident, that they would obtain necessary health assistance,*" said Secretary Frasco.

BBM Guest Program

Secretary Frasco likewise announced the Bisita Be My (BBM) Guest Program, an exciting guest incentive system for OFWs that the DOT shall launch this year, in collaboration with relevant national government agencies such as the Department of Migrant Workers (DMW).

"*Through the BBM Guest Program, we will be offering raffle prizes to OFWs that bring guests to the Philippines. We will be providing them with a travel passport that they can use to go across key destinations, get stamps, and claim a prize at the airport; this will also give them a privilege card that would provide them with discounts in the accredited establishments across the country,*" said Secretary Frasco.

Employment in Tourism-related industries

On the aspect of addressing the country's shortage of tourism workforce and the huge demand for tourism employment among workers that got displaced due to the pandemic, the DOT entered a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) on August 30 to formalize the two agencies' partnership to generate employment in the tourism sector and allied industries. Through the MOU, the DOT and DOLE will simultaneously launch the "Trabaho, Turismo, Asenso!" Philippine Tourism Job Fair in Manila, Cebu, and Davao from September 22 to 24. More than 1,500 jobs will be available to jobseekers in the tourism sector.

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Other DOT Programs

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The DOT, Secretary Frasco shared, is also working on mechanisms that will: improve tourism standards, product accreditation, and review of product audits to be at par with international tourism standards; identify and address gaps; and incorporate emerging standards that cater to the modern traveler's needs.

The DOT is also working on developing new regional tourism circuits and cultural and heritage hubs to give foreign and local tourists more choices in going around the country. At the same time, the Department is looking into introducing innovative tourism services such as hop on and hop off buses in key tourism destinations and international and local river cruises.

"*Our country is rich in history, tradition, and culture and it is high time we pour more of our attention in capitalizing on these strengths of our identity. We will expand ourselves from the traditional portfolio and explore multidimensional tourism. The department is also working on developing new regional tourism circuits that will highlight nature-based tourism, film tourism, food and gastronomy, heritage and culture, farm and agri-tourism, health and wellness, and for the very first time, the arts are now identified as a priority tourism product portfolio,*" enthused Secretary Frasco.

"*There is much work that needs to be done. Our greatest challenge now is to not only to grow the industry back to its pre-pandemic level, which used to hold more than 12 percent of the country's total Gross Domestic Product, but to exceed our previous position and take a primary tourism position in the ASEAN and globally as that is the birthright of every Filipino. We anticipate that with the gradual recovery of the tourism industry, this industry will once again become one of the major drivers of the national economy, and a major contributor to our gross domestic product,*" added Secretary Frasco.

Additional Budget for the DOT?

To enable the attainment of the DOT's plans and programs, Secretary Frasco rallied for the favorable decision of the House of Representatives on the Department's budget for FY 2023. However, several lawmakers noted the necessity of increasing the Tourism Department's proposed budget, underscoring the tourism industry's significant contribution to the Philippine economy.

"*We cannot send a good soldier to battle with only a knife on hand. I strongly support for a higher budget for the Tourism Department with all the good intentions to succeed in mind,*" said Minority Leader Representative Marcelino Libanan of 4Ps Partylist.

"*If the majority would increase the said budget, I would support and welcome the move. As a revenue and job generating department, adequate budgetary support must be accorded to the Department of Tourism so that the Philippines can compete for tourism arrivals with our ASEAN neighbors and create local livelihood opportunities,*" remarked Representative Edcel Lagman from the 1st District of Albay.

"*I fully trust the capability of our Secretary of Tourism and am calling on all my colleagues in the House to closely discern the relevance of the DOT and perhaps look at the possibility of increasing the budget of the Department that as we know is struggling at the moment,*" said Representative Jefferson Khonghun from the 1st District of Zambales. "*We feel that with the 3.2 billion, the proposal is so small compared to the income that is being gained out of the tourism industry,*" added Representative Wilter Palma from the 1st District of Zamboanga Sibugay.

Frasco welcomed the proposal to increase the budget of the DOT. "*While I could have just stayed in my beloved town of Liloan, I accepted the tourism portfolio with high hopes because the President has identified the tourism industry as one of the top priorities of his administration. This optimism has reverberated across all sectors of the tourism industry. And, therefore, I come before you today with high hopes as well that with the support of the House of Representatives, the Tourism Department will receive the budget that it needs to fulfill all the visions and programs of the President,*" enthused Secretary Frasco, who prior to taking on the role as the DOT's head, served as the Mayor of Liloan in Cebu. **DOT**

Frasco eyes visitor-friendly, "distinctly Filipino" air, seaports in PHL

Department of Tourism (DOT) Secretary Christina Garcia Frasco eyes bringing improvements to the country's air and seaports to encapsulate the "Filipino Brand" and give tourists a good first and last impression when they visit The Philippines.

In a meeting with Department of Transportation (DOTr) Secretary Jaime J. Bautista on August 8, the Tourism Secretary noted that as the primary gateway to the country, airports and seaports play an integral role in the overall tourist experience and the tourism value chain.

The DOT, she added, envisions improving existing facilities in both airports and seaports by introducing enhancements that will make the ports more aesthetically pleasing, convenient, tourist-friendly, and most importantly, reflective of the "Filipino Brand".

"*Aside from improving convenience to travelers and tourists, the DOT also looks at putting a 'Filipino Brand' to our ports, a good image of the Philippines that would remain in the memories of visitors to the country before touring different destinations in the Philippines and long after they have left*," said Secretary Frasco.

Some of the DOT's recommended enhancements include the installation of signages that will have a uniform look in all air and seaports, as well as the use of lighting, backdrop, and furniture that will distinctly reflect the "Filipino Brand". Frasco noted that the DOT wants "the experience to be positive for all senses" and that there will also be interactive displays that will feature various artists and artisans to make the airport experience extraordinary and experiential for travelers.

"*Traditionally, the Department of Tourism has been involved in the promotion and marketing purely and mostly in ads but this time around we wanted a tacit manifestation of our brand as the Philippines because this is what the President very clearly said in his SONA, that he wants us to promote the Filipino brand to the world. This is something we would like to herald in the Philippines beginning with our pride, and our culture, our heritage, our identity as Filipinos. And that is why the elements of the aesthetic improvements that we wish to introduce are all made in the Philippines and distinctively Filipino,*" enthused the Tourism Secretary.

In addition to aesthetically appealing ports, the DOT is also pushing for a passenger experience that is stress-free with more efficient service and reduced passenger waiting time. The DOT recommends a One-Stop-Shop for land, air, and sea connectivity with provision for digitalized service to facilitate efficiency. The Department also committed to establish a tourism assistance ***(continue on page 9)***

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desk with trained personnel to facilitate visitors' concerns.

Frasco likewise underscored the need to provide appropriate features and facilities in gateways and transport hubs for persons with disabilities (PWDs) as part of the Department's advocacy for Barrier Free Tourism. Availability of wheelchairs, elevators with PWD -friendly features, clearly designated PWD parking slots, and check-in counters with low and recessed or split-level counters that can accommodate persons seated on wheelchairs were among the proposals of the DOT.

Meanwhile, the resumption of pre-pandemic routes was suggested by the DOT to minimize the congestion in the major ports. The opening of new local and domestic routes was also proposed by the Department given the positive developments in travel conditions and demand.

"*While we understand that introducing major infrastructure changes to the existing airports and seaports is something that cannot be done in the short-term, in answer to the call of the President to improve the overall tourist experience, we have identified ways where we can introduce enhancements that do not necessarily entail long-term actions*," the Tourism Secretary added.

For the airport and seaport enhancement program, the DOT recommended the Ninoy Aquino International Airport Terminal 2 (NAIA-T2), Davao International Airport (DVO), and Cebu City Pier 1 as pilot projects.

The program, to be led by the DOT with the support of the DOTr, will be a joint partnership between the two agencies. During the meeting, Transportation Secretary Bautista agreed to the DOT's proposal to create a Technical Working Group (TWG) that would oversee a smooth and comprehensive facilitation of the enhancement program.

"*I think our experience working with airlines and now working with government will now allow us to solve the problems and the issues and working with the Department of Tourism we can better improve the experience of our tourists. I am very happy we started this conversation and I agree that we need to further discuss the details of the project, let's organize a working group. This is a very good collaboration between the DOT and the Department of Transportation. Let's make it happen*," said Secretary Bautista.

In addition to its recommendation to reinstate identified domestic and international flights, the DOT also proposes to strengthen its partnership with the DOTr on the aspect of air and sea routes development. ***DOT***

Ninoy Aquino International Airport Terminal 2 (NAIA-T2)

Davao International Airport (DVO)

Cebu City Pier 1

Thailand to offer tourism job opportunities to Filipinos-- Frasco

BANGKOK, Thailand – Thousands of jobs in the hospitality industry of Thailand, particularly in the accommodation sector will soon be available to the Filipino tourism workforce.

This is one of the main agreements in the high level bilateral meeting between the Philippines Department of Tourism (DOT) Secretary Christina Garcia Frasco and Thailand Ministry of Tourism and Sports (MOTS) Minister Phiphat Ratchakitprakarn on August 18.

During the meeting, the Thai Tourism Minister noted that with the lifting of travel restrictions and resumption of tourism activities, the Thai tourism industry is currently facing a shortage in their workforce with 60 percent of vacancies from different hotel staff up to middle manager positions.

There is preference towards professionals from The Philippines, Minister Ratchakitprakarn added, noting Filipinos' impressive command of the English language – a requirement in accommodating Thailand's increasing foreign tourists and guests.

"*We note with serious consideration the shortage in the tourism workforce coming out of the COVID-19 pandemic. I am presently in discussions with the Philippine Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) wherein we have agreed to conduct joint job fairs all over the Philippines, specifically catered to the tourism industry for the purpose of ensuring that those that left the industry or may have been laid off from the industry during the time of pandemic would once again have the opportunity to be employed*," Secretary Frasco remarked during the meeting.

DOT and DOLE are currently working on a tourism job fair program entitled "Trabaho Turismo Asenso!" together with partner local government units (LGUs) and incoming Thai counterparts slated this coming September 22 to 24.

Secretary Frasco shared that she invited Thailand in the job fair series to extend more opportunities to the Filipinos wanting to work in the Thailand hotel and restaurant industry. The invitation was gladly accepted by the Thai Minister, who confirmed their country's participation in the said job fair.

Secretary Frasco disclosed that the DOT, through its Regional Offices, is also undertaking surveys of the number of available job vacancies, position titles, and other job posting information in each region of the country for additional local work opportunities.

The DOT-accredited enterprises expected to join the said career expo include Accommodation Establishments, Travel and Tour Services, Meetings, Incentives, Conventions and Exhibitions (MICE) facilities and organizers, Tourist Transport Operators, Health and Wellness Services, Restaurant/Food Service and other Tourism-Related Establishments. ***DOT***

on the DOT: Staff

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Other Meetings held during the 11th APEC-TMM

Bilateral Meeting with Ministry of Primary Resources and Tourism (MPRT) Brunei Darussalam

Secretary Frasco engaged in bilateral talks with the Ministry of Primary Resources and Tourism (MPRT) of Brunei Darussalam, represented by MPRT Minister H.E Dato Seri Setia Dr. Awang Haji Abdul Manaf Bin Haji Metussin.

Brunei has always been known as a staunch ally of the Philippines in programs and activities in international forums such as the APEC, ASEAN, and the Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Malaysia East ASEAN Growth Area (BIMP-EAGA).

Secretary Frasco expressed the intention of DOT to renew and explore more specific collaborations with Brunei based on the premise of the Philippines-Brunei Tourism Cooperation Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that was signed in 2011.

Bilateral Meeting with Malaysia's Minister of Tourism, Arts and Culture (MOTAC)

Secretary Frasco met with her counterpart from Malaysia H.E Dato' Sri Hajah Nancy Binti Shukri, Malaysia's MOTAC, to explore possible continuing collaboration and partnership initiatives between The Philippines and Malaysia.

Secretary Frasco shared the DOT's interest to continue the cordial tourism exchanges between the two countries. Based on the DOT's data, since the Philippines reopened its doors to international travelers in February of this year, 17,797 tourists from Malaysia have visited the country.

A MOU had been signed between the DOT and MOTAC in August 2001 aiming to foster cooperation between Malaysia and the Philippines in the areas of Travel Facilitation; Research and Development; Education and Training; Tourism Investments; and Meetings, Incentives, Conventions and Exhibitions (MICE).

Bilateral Meeting with Republic of Korea (ROK) Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism

During her bilateral meeting with ROK Second Vice-Minister of Culture, Sports and Tourism Cho Yongman on the sidelines of the APEC-TMM, Secretary Frasco expressed the Philippines' far reaching friendship and sense of community with the people of Korea.

Second Vice-Minister Yongman agreed with Secretary Frasco, stating that the Philippines is an important partner for Korea. He called for the safety and convenience of tourists going to the country, and committed that more Koreans will visit Cebu.

Secretary Frasco responded with the assurance of continued training, enhanced presence of tourist police, improved infrastructure and gateway accessibility. Among the key points discussed among the two officials is the resumption of talks and arrangements to implement the MOU on Tourism Cooperation, which was signed in 2019 but derailed by the pandemic.

Meeting with Thailand Tourism Stakeholders

To maximize her trip to Bangkok for the 11th APEC-TMM, Secretary Frasco reached out to the tourism stakeholders of Thailand from the leisure, Education Tourism, Dive tourism, MICE, and aviation sectors to explore possible collaborations that will entice more Thai tourists to come to the Philippines.

Present in the meeting were representatives from: the Thai Travel Agents Association (TTAA); Esque Lifestyle & Travel; Jubilee Travel Co., Ltd.; Dive Potato; SC World Express; Big World Holiday; Worldwide Agency Co., Ltd.; Abroad Land; Pleione Travel Co., Ltd.; Supertrips Co., Ltd.; All Around Trading & Holidays Co., Ltd.; Kor Pun Gun; Bright Idea; Mango Learning Express; Philippine Airlines, Cebu Pacific Air (Thailand); Thai Air Asia; and Siam Tourism Group Co., Ltd.

DOT to facilitate interagency effort to strengthen Filipino Brand of Service

MANILA, Philippines – Tourism Secretary Christina Garcia Frasco on August 4 bared the Department of Tourism (DOT)'s immediate plans to facilitate an interagency technical working group (TWG) which seeks to strengthen the capacity of micro entrepreneurs such as food vendors to provide quality tourism services.

The Department, Secretary Frasco said, has already reached out to the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG), Department of Agriculture (DA), and the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR), which shall comprise the said TWG.

"*We are facilitating this interagency technical working group (TWG) for the purpose of commencing discussions on the implementation of standards to ensure high quality of tourism services which include regulations on accommodations, services, and pricing standards,*" said Secretary Frasco.

The Tourism Secretary said that the DOT can help improve the standards of treating tourists in all destinations through the facilitation of trainings under the Filipino Brand of Service Excellence (FBSE) Program.

The FBSE Program promotes the best qualities and positive values of Filipino hospitality. It is envisioned to enhance and uplift the quality of tourism services in the country aimed at fostering excellent service to tourists as part of our distinct Filipino brand, thereby making the excellence in service a regional brand and a holistic national identity.

With three unique modules, the FBSE program aims to instill the culture of service excellence among tourism stakeholders in the country, and raise the quality of service standards among the workforce in key tourism and service sectors.

"*If we are able to come together to agree on certain standards that our destinations would comply with, then this would redound to the overall improvement of our tourism industry because in the end, tourists will be delighted with every destination that they visit, and keep coming back,*" Secretary Frasco.

According to the Tourism Secretary, the FBSE trainings will cover topics such as: Service Excellence, Understanding and Engaging Customers, and Complaints Handling.

"*The training for the tourism community in Virgin Island, Bohol will commence next week,*" Secretary Frasco confirmed.

These trainings, she noted, will be opened to all interested tourism stakeholders, and would be facilitated by the DOT Office of Industry Manpower Development (OIMD), together with the DOT Region 7 Office and in coordination with the Local Government Units. **DOT**

Frasco optimistic PH tourism resurgence, lauds Cebu Tourism Success

CEBU CITY – Tourism Secretary Christina Garcia Frasco is optimistic that the Philippine tourism industry will have a resurgence under the vision set forth by President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. of strengthening the industry through institutional reforms that would spread development across the country.

The Tourism Secretary made the announcement during the GO EXPLORE CEBU: A TOURISM SUMMIT organized by the Cebu Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCCI) held at the Sky Hall Seaside Cebu-SMX Convention Center on August 11.

Addressing some 200 stakeholders from the tourism industry, representatives from the local government units (LGUs), businesses, and the CCCI, Secretary Frasco shared DOT projections that the Philippine tourism industry, which used to hold more than 12% of the country's total gross domestic product before the pandemic, will recoup its losses and revert to pre-pandemic level in the next three years.

The Tourism Secretary also noted that since the country's reopening of borders to international leisure travelers starting February 10 of this year, up until August 7, the DOT has recorded 1.1 million foreign arrivals.

To recall, Secretary Frasco announced that the DOT will pursue seven main objectives which will include: 1) Improvement of tourism infrastructure and accessibility; 2) Cohesive and comprehensive digitalization and connectivity; 3) Enhancement of overall tourist experience; 4) Equalization of tourism product development and promotion; 5) Diversification of portfolio through multidimensional tourism; 6) Maximization of domestic tourism; and, 7) Strengthening tourism governance through collaboration with LGUs and stakeholders. In line with these objectives, Secretary Frasco also bared the Department's plans to streamline travel protocols for visitors and review accreditation requirements for businesses.

"*Consequently, we will provide a convenient and better tourism experience for both foreign and domestic travelers through standardized travel protocols. The DOT has reached out to the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG), the Bureau of Immigration (BI), and the Bureau of Quarantine (BoQ), to ensure that entry protocols and requirements are streamlined and updates are easily available to tourists,*" said Secretary Frasco.

"*We will also see to it that the quality of our tourist destinations and product offerings meet international standards through rigorous establishment accreditation and product audits. Currently, our Office for Standards Regulation is reviewing our accreditation requirements to address gaps and incorporate emerging tourism standards that cater to the needs of modern travelers,*" she added.

During the event, the Tourism Secretary also announced the DOT's ongoing development of new regional tourism circuits that will highlight nature-based tourism, MICE tourism, food and gastronomy, heritage and culture, farm and agri-tourism, health and wellness, and arts, among others.

"*All these tourism dimensions will get an equal promotion, attention, and support as we expand ourselves from the traditional portfolio and explore multidimensional tourism,*" said Secretary Frasco.

To end her remarks, Secretary Frasco invited the stakeholders present to build a stronger bridge of collaboration to uplift the tourism industry.

"*All of you play a vital role in our aspirations for recovery and progress. Your success, our success, means more jobs for our people, a better economy, more productive workforce and sparking our recovery not only in our tourism industry here in Cebu but for entirety of our country's economy. With this, I invite everyone to join the efforts of the Department of Tourism and the national government in building a stronger bridge of collaboration to maximize all of our efforts and that we would be able to exceed our previous standing in the global stage. It has been said that what Cebu does, the rest of the country follows. I do hope that we would see the same enthusiasm and openness for collaboration from all of you, business leaders, across our province and across our country,*" remarked Secretary Frasco.

Now on its 26th year, the Cebu Business Month (CBM) celebration–which is a flagship project of the CCCI–carries the theme "Realign, Reinforce, Rebuild" as it envisions inspiring beneficial results despite challenging times. The annual event is being held with the objective to promote and encourage businesses in the province.

Joining Secretary Frasco in the event were DOT Undersecretary Shahlimar Hofer Tamano, CBM 2022 Ways and Means Chairman JP Chiongbian, CBM 2022 Tourism Chairperson Kate Anzani, CCCI President Charles Kenneth Co, Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PCCI) Regional Governor for Central Visayas Melanie Ng, and Marissa Fernan, Sr. Vice President of SM Prime Holdings, Inc. **DOT**

35 intl, local dive and marine experts take centerstage at PHIDEX 2022

MANILA – World-class underwater photographers, technical divers, and marine conservationists graced the Philippine International Dive Expo (PHIDEX) 2022, the country's biggest platform to highlight and promote the dive industry last August 19-21, at the SMX Convention Center, Pasay City.

Spearheaded by the Philippines Department of Tourism (PDOT), PHIDEX 2022 gathered dive industry leaders, stakeholders, experts, government, businesses, and dive enthusiasts for three days, as it aimed to amplify the message that a stronger and better Philippine dive industry is back to welcome divers from all over the world.

"*For our participants, PHIDEX 2022 is the chance for divers, marine biologists, conservationists, and underwater photographers to forge partnerships and discuss trends in the diving community. For the Philippine government, PHIDEX is a green light. It's a message to our dear foreign tourists—it's been a long time coming. Welcome back and we hope you enjoy your stay,*" enthused Tourism Secretary Christina Garcia Frasco.

"*More importantly, PHIDEX 2022 comes in an opportune time for us to showcase the resilience of the Philippine tourism industry,*" the Tourism Secretary added.

With the theme "Back into the Blue: One with the Sea," more than 30 foreign and local experts in marine conservation, freediving, and underwater photography took centerstage in discussion and knowledge-sharing sessions at the PHIDEX 2022 dive conference.

Angelique Songco, site manager of the Tubbataha Reefs Natural Park World Heritage Area, and AA Yaptinchay, director and founder of the conservation NGO Marine Wildlife Watch of the Philippines, both spoke about marine conservation and protection. Yaptinchay talked about the conservation of sharks in the Philippines, while Songco discussed about the changes our seas have gone through over the years.

Discussing the ins and outs of freediving were marine economist Tara Abrina and certified diver Cha Ocampo. Abrina talked about the coastal development lessons she learned from fishermen, while Ocampo spoke about the fragility and beauty of the underwater environment.

PHIDEX participants also heard about underwater photography from award-winning photographers Rafael Fernandez Caballero and Alex Mustard. Mustard shared the joys and challenges of macrophotography, while Caballero discussed the magic of ocean lights for underwater photography.

Indonesian actress-turned-professional-diver Kirana Larasati also graced the PHIDEX stage to talk about humanity and diving.

World-renowned dive organizations also gave talks at PHIDEX, namely the Divers Alert Network (DAN), and the Professional Association of Diving Instructors (PADI). DAN is a dive safety organization committed to the health and safety of divers, while PADI is the biggest ocean exploration and diver organization in the world, operating in 186 countries and territories.

Romir Aglugub, business liaison for DAN World, talked about dive safety. On the other hand, Lee Butler and Andy Auer, Regional Managers from PADI, discussed their organization's capabilities beyond Scuba diving.

The DOT partnered with several organizations to make PHIDEX possible. These include event partners DAN World, PADI, Scuba Schools International (SSI) - Mares, Garmin, Philippine Airlines, and Scuba Studio. Also in the roster of PHIDEX collaborators are media partners Wet Pixel, Asian Diver, Scuba Diver Ocean Planet, and Underwater360.

PHIDEX 2022 was also highlighted by Dive TRAVEX B2B meetings and conference, where about 62 International buyers, media and speakers from 19 source markets, namely, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Switzerland, Netherlands, France, Italy, Israel, Turkey, United Kingdom, USA, South Korea, Japan, Taiwan, Thailand, Indonesia, Singapore, Germany, and Denmark converged. The Dive TRAVEX and Dive Conference was also made accessible through a virtual platform especially for participants affected by international border restrictions due to COVID-19.

Luxury hotels around the SM Mall of Asia Complex also served as PHIDEX partners. These include: The Golden Phoenix Hotel, TRYP by Wyndham, Microtel by Wyndham, and Hotel 101. The Conrad Hotel also caps the list of partner accommodations as the official hotel of PHIDEX buyers, media, and VIP speakers. ***DOT***

DOT celebrates Philippine Accessible Disability Services, Inc. (PADS) Dragon Boat Team historic four gold medal haul

Photos courtesy of PADS Dragon Boat Team

The Department of Tourism (DOT) commends the historic feat of the Philippine Accessible Disability Services, Inc. (PADS) Dragon Boat Team as the inaugural champions of the recently concluded International Dragon Boat Federation's (IDBF) 13th Club Crew World Championships para dragon boat category in Sarasota, Florida.

The PADS dragon boat team, comprised of differently abled persons and persons with impairments, lorded over four categories namely the 2,000-meter small boat PD2 category, the small boat PD1 and PD2 200m races, and the 500m small boat PD2 category.

"*We commend the extraordinary achievement of the Cebuano para dragon boat team which has brought pride to the Philippines,*" enthused Tourism Secretary Christina Garcia Frasco.

"*The DOT believes in the strength of sports tourism as a viable tourism product parallel to the Department's support to Filipino athletes who are some of the best tourism ambassadors for our country,*" she added.

The tourism chief emphasized that the DOT supports the staging of international and local sports competitions in the country to further develop different sports including dragon boat racing – which can provide a competitive edge to our athletes, with the country being an archipelago surrounded by vast bodies of water. ***DOT***

DOT-TIEZA Hosts the Pacific Business Mission to the Philippines

Photos courtesy of TIEZA

The Department of Tourism (DOT) and the Tourism Infrastructure and Enterprise Zone Authority (TIEZA) hosted the welcome activities for the Pacific Business Mission to the Philippines on August 15, 2022. The mission was an initiative of the Philippine Embassy in Canberra, Australia in partnership with the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) which aims to bring Pacific Islanders state officials and businessmen from Australia, New Zealand, and Papua New Guinea to the Philippines to meet and network specifically with Philippine investment promotion agencies and business sector.

The welcome activities started with the delegation touring the nearest historical landmarks in Manila. Despite the heavy rains, they experienced the hospitality and warmth of our people while learning about our history and culture at the National Museum, followed by a cinematic viewing at Fort Santiago and a short visit to Casa Manila. This was made possible through the partnership with Intramuros Administration (IA) and National Museum (NM).

On behalf of DOT Secretary Ma. Christina Garcia Frasco, DOT Undersecretary Mae Elaine T. Bathan personally gave her warm welcome to all the delegates and guests during the program. TIEZA Chief Operating Officer (COO) Mark T. Lapid also gave an inspiring message to mark the opening of the week-long event. On the other hand, Atty. Karen Mae G. Sarinas-Baydo, Assistant COO of the TEZ Management Sector of TIEZA, discussed the investment opportunities in Tourism Enterprise Zones (TEZs) and the assets of the authority.

The program included a Filipino dinner, and cultural presentations from Indak Turismo, the Philippine Tourism Chorale, and the Sindaw Philippines Performing Arts Guild. The event was officially closed by DOT National Capital Region (NCR) Director Sharlene Batin.

The Philippine Embassy in Canberra led by Ambassador Ma. Hellen B. Dela Vega conceptualized this program in partnership with DTI primarily to encourage the Pacific Island countries to explore and expand trade, tourism, and investment opportunities with the Philippines. As part of their mission, the delegates also visited Subic, Clark, and Bataan.

With the tourism sector as one of the vital links in the recovery of the Philippine economy, the DOT and TIEZA welcome the Pacific Business Mission delegation and look forward to more partnerships in the future for the mutual benefit of all participants. ***DOT***

ON THE GROUND NEWS

Regional News Updates

DOT Region 2 Conducts Training On Enhancing Sabutan as Part of the Palanan Tourism Related Livelihood and Experiences

By DOT 2

The Department of Tourism Region 2 (DOT-2) Office successfully conducted a Training on Enhancing Sabutan, as part of the Palanan Tourism Related Livelihood and Experiences for the Palanan Upstream Women Weavers Association and Sabutan Weavers Association last July 25-27, 2022 in Palanan, Isabela.

The three-day training program was designed to enable the Community-Based Tourism Organizations (CBTOs) in Palanan to develop new products using sabutan weaving, and integrate the craft into their daily lives as a source of income. This is consistent with the DOT's Tourism Industry Skills Program (TISP), which supports various tourism stakeholders, particularly the members of CBTOs, in contributing to initiatives aimed at enhancing capability and disseminating the advantages of tourism to the local level as a cultural product.

The 30 women participants, who come from two CBTOs in Palanan, had the opportunity to demonstrate their artistic abilities by creating distinctive designs and products from the sabutan plant such as bags, hats, table runner, placemats, fans, among others.

The participating CBTOs were also given a start-up package by DOT-2 that comprised four industrial sewing machines and other sewing supplies.

The training is under the Community- Based Tourism Organizations -Assistance in Development (CBTO-AID), a program that helps the community in the grassroots to bounce back from the pandemic. It also aims to help the community to produce souvenir products using local materials with cultural significance.

The sabutan plant flourishes extensively along the coastal stretches found in Palanan, Isabela. According to some claims, the fibers taken from the sabutan plant's leaves are harder, tougher, and smoother in texture compared to other raw materials used for weaving handicrafts. As a result, the handicrafts manufactured from these fibers are of a higher quality in terms of longevity and durability. ***DOT***

DOT Trains Bohol Vendors on Filipino Brand of Service Excellence

By DOT 7

VIRGIN ISLAND, Panglao, Bohol – As earlier committed by Tourism Secretary Christina Frasco, the Department of Tourism (DOT) on August 10 commenced the training on the Filipino Brand of Service Excellence (FBSE) to vendors and service providers in Virgin Island in Panglao, Bohol through its Region 7 (Central Visayas) Office, in coordination with the Bohol Tourism Office and the Municipality of Panglao.

The training was attended by a total of thirty-four (34) participants comprised of food stall owners and their staff, as well as representatives of the Panglao Island Protected Seascape Protected Area Management Board.

It can be recalled that Secretary Frasco announced plans to facilitate an inter-agency technical working group (TWG) that aims to strengthen the capacity of micro entrepreneurs to provide quality tourism services. The FBSE training has been successfully conducted for individuals, small and medium enterprises, and world-recognized establishments serving the tourist market, according to the Tourism Secretary.

"We are grateful to our participants for showing the willingness to learn help improve our tourism industry so it becomes sustainable and focused on an enhanced tourist experience. We also thank our partners from the public sector, particularly the Bohol Tourism Office and the Municipality of Panglao for partnering with the DOT in order to uplift the service delivery of our tourism workers. Through this program, we hope to develop a service excellence culture among tourism stakeholders in the island," said Secretary Frasco.

"Grounded on the principle of making tourism activities sustainable for the long haul, we wish to equip our graduates with a deliberate inclination towards service that is centered on ensuring due care for our tourists and a positive experience overall," added the Secretary.

The modular course focused on the foundations of Filipino values – Makamay-likha, Makatao, Makakalikasan, Makabansa, Masayahin, May Bayanihan and May Pag-asa, with said course translated to the local dialect spoken in Bohol.

"These are basic values that we, Filipinos, live in our daily lives. By bringing it into our encounters with clients, we help enable respect for the Creator, environment-awareness, cordiality, helpfulness and politeness, love of country and hopefulness," added Secretary Frasco added.

Ms. Alice Queblatin, President of the Cebu Alliance of Tour Operations Specialists (CATOS) and Certified FBSE Trainer, discussed the main topics of the seminar, namely Service Excellence, 7Ms of Filipino Values and Understanding Guest Needs and Service Recovery.

Meanwhile, the participants acknowledged the need to improve service delivery and expressed appreciation for the effort extended by the DOT. The training was capped off by the participants' recitation of a pledge signifying their commitment to uphold FBSE as they carry out their endeavors. ***DOT***

DOT 10 brings the Colors of Mindanao to BIMP-EAGA

By DOT 10

Department of Tourism Region 10 (DOT-10) Director Marie Elaine S. Unchuan represented the Philippines as Head of the Philippine Delegation at the 18th Brunei Darussalam– Indonesia–Malaysia–Philippines East ASEAN Growth Area (BIMP-EAGA) Joint Tourism Development Cluster (JTDC) Meeting held in Kota Kinabalu, Malaysia, on August 24, 2022.

Director Unchuan presented the Philippines-EAGA report which covers the whole island of Mindanao and the province of Palawan at the meeting. She discussed that, for the cluster, the DOT is focused on three BIMP-EAGA tourism sector priorities, namely tourism access and support infrastructure development, ecotourism product development, and the promotion of coordinated approaches to nature, culture, and heritage management.

"*Here in the Philippines, our Department of Tourism, with Secretary Frasco's blessing, is keen on pushing for the development of Halal or Muslim-friendly Tourism. Especially here in Mindanao and Palawan, being part of BIMP-EAGA, we feel like we would miss out on so many opportunities for connectivity if we do not give our Muslim brothers and sisters the proper hospitality they are owed,*" DOT-10 Regional Director (RD) Unchuan said.

In her discussion, she introduced some of the projects of the DOT Mindanao cluster headed by the Undersecretary Myra Paz Valderrosa-Abubakar. These projects include the Turtle Islands Eco-Halal tourism development and Zamboanga connectivity circuit; BIMP-EAGA Dive initiatives; Mindanao Halal Culinary Tourism product development; promotion of the Colors of Mindanao campaign, Halal awareness initiatives as support for Halal or Muslim-friendly cuisines and festivals; tourism promotions, connectivity, and capability enhancement with BARMM; enhancement or development of festival celebrations as part of the initiatives for the development of BIMP-EAGA Community-Based Ecotourism; and the proposal for the BIMP-EAGA Mindanao International Travel Festival.

Indonesia, the new Chair of the BIMP-EAGA, expressed its optimism to explore Dive Tourism in the Philippines, and lauded the country for its focus on Halal Tourism Development. On the other hand, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) also commended the DOT's Colors of Mindanao campaign for its diversity of products presented in a very cohesive theme.

"*I hope that next year, when it's the Philippines turn to host, we can show you all that we have been doing and all that we have accomplished towards this goal,*" added DOT-10 RD Unchuan.

The next BIMP-EAGA cluster meeting will be in Zamboanga in 2023. **DOT**